



HEALTHY

TEETH

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TEETH

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HEALTHY TEETH

*M*ANY people think of the condition of their teeth as a matter of circumstance; either teeth are hard and strong or they are not, and there is not much to be done about it. "All my folks have soft teeth" is the excuse offered very often for visible fillings, vacant spaces or other evidence of defective teeth. It is also commonly supposed that teeth are lifeless objects set in the jaw. Except for decay and wear, it is thought, the teeth remain throughout life just as they develop in youth. All these ideas are far from the truth.

It must be clear to all that teeth are living things while they are growing, for lifeless objects do not grow. What we seem to forget is that they continue to live even after they stop growing. Not only are

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teeth living, but sometimes they are healthy and at other times in a state of ill health, the condition depending largely upon the general health of the body. During and after periods of illness, tooth decay is often pronounced. When vigorous health returns, the condition of the teeth improves.

Scientists have observed that animals fed upon a diet lacking certain food essentials, suffer from dental conditions resembling the defective teeth so prevalent among humans. On the other hand, similar animals, fed upon a good diet, have strong



Mouth health is one sign of general good health.

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teeth that remain sound as long as the animals live.

Dentists have found that much the same principle applies to human teeth. Persons in good health who eat plenty of the right foods have strong, healthy teeth remarkably free from decay. Others on an ill-chosen diet have poor teeth despite apparent health. The trouble with the practical application of this principle is that few of us can live the completely healthy life. We cannot always be out-of-doors as nature intended; neither do we always obtain all the food elements we need.

What is to be done about this problem? First we will try to include the necessary foods in our daily diet. Also, we will keep our teeth clean and our gums healthy. Finally, we will go to the dentist at regular intervals for inspection, care, and advice.

SELECTING THE RIGHT FOOD

Teeth are like bones in that they have several mineral elements, notably lime, in their make-up; they are supplied with blood vessels to carry food to the various parts of the tooth structure; and they are well supplied with nerves, as many of us learn from experience. Teeth differ from bones in

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that they are covered with a flinty enamel; but this substance, too, is chiefly mineral in composition.

So we see that a diet rich in mineral elements is necessary if we are to have strong teeth. Especially is this diet important for the mother-to-be, for her baby's teeth are taking form even before he is born. It is plain to all that such a diet is needed for the growing child during those important years when his teeth are developing. We sometimes forget that the same diet is also important to the well-being of the grown man and woman.

So, if you are bent upon building and keeping strong teeth, you will give thought to your daily diet. Unless your doctor finds evidence of some digestive disturbance which prevents you from eating some of these foods, you will plan to include in the three meals you eat each day the few simple, common foods the experts have found to be essential to good nutrition.

Two glasses of milk; an egg, one serving of meat or meat substitute; one potato and two servings of other vegetables; two servings of fruit, one of them fresh; some dark bread or cereal; butter.*

*The reason these foods are essential to good nutrition is explained in "What to Eat and Why." Ask for a copy of this John Hancock health booklet.

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Colored vegetables, fruit, eggs, and milk are the chief tooth-building foods: eat some of each every day.

This is the easy way to obtain all the essentials. When these foods have been taken care of, you may complete your daily diet from whatever else you like best—within reason, of course. But, understanding the importance of these foods to health, you will not let your liking for other dishes to which you are accustomed prevent you from including the foods you really need in your diet.

But good food is not the only nutritional factor in building sound teeth. Sunlight enables the body to make the best use of the minerals in the

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food that is eaten, so recreation in the fresh air and sunshine makes for health. Rest, too, is an important aid in nutrition.*

PRESERVING TEETH

Even if it were of no value in warding off tooth trouble, ordinary regard for mouth hygiene would require that the teeth be kept clean. But there is another important reason for brushing the teeth.

*General rules of health are set forth in the John Hancock booklet, "Guarding Your Family's Health."



During periods of rapid growth, cod liver oil may be added to the other tooth-building foods.

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Brushing massages the gums, promotes circulation of the blood in them and gives to them a healthy firmness. This massage of the gums produces the greatest benefit if the brush is moved vigorously from high up on the gum surface across the gums and teeth, pulling the brush down when cleaning the upper teeth and rubbing the brush with a firm upward motion across the lower gums and teeth. This is the chief reason dental hygienists insist that teeth be brushed at least once a day and preferably oftener.

The chewing of tough, crisp foods also tends to keep the gums healthy and teeth strong.

DENTAL CARE

Cleanliness alone is not sufficient to preserve teeth. In spite of careful brushing and vigorous massage of the gums, dental defects develop; so sensible people have formed the habit of going to the dentist every six months, whether or not they notice any evidence of trouble. Periodic inspections enable the dentist to detect the beginning of tooth decay, which may be repaired before extensive damage is done. He can forestall threaten-

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ing gum infections by appropriate treatment, and finally, he has the opportunity to give advice about special care which may be indicated.

The first grinding teeth which appear in the child's mouth are especially liable to defects in the enamel covering. If these defects are neglected, the resulting decay will ruin the child's teeth. It is important that children have the benefit of periodic dental inspections from the time the first teeth appear, and that these inspections be continued throughout childhood and life. Of course, young and old should go to the dentist at the first sign of trouble should it occur between inspections.

The penalties of faulty diet and lack of dental care are more far-reaching than occasional toothaches and gaping spaces in the mouth. Decayed teeth and diseased gums often become the portal for the entrance of disease-producing microbes into the body. From the decaying surface of a tooth cavity, bacteria gain access to the jaw, where they may set up a root abscess. Sometimes infections are found upon the roots of otherwise sound teeth, presumably the result of diseased gums. From the root abscesses, poisons produced

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by the bacteria, and often the germs themselves, are carried by the blood stream to produce crippling rheumatism, heart disease, and other grave, even fatal, conditions. Because healthy looking teeth may have root abscesses, only periodic dental inspections can reveal this dangerous condition.

No tooth need ever reach the state in which it endangers health. In good health, a diet rich in tooth-building foodstuffs helps to keep the teeth strong. Thorough brushing of teeth and gums helps to keep the mouth healthy and ward off



Brush from the gums across the teeth; the upper teeth downward, and the lower teeth upward.

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Your teeth should be inspected by your dentist at regular intervals.

trouble. Periodic dental inspections permit of repair and preventive treatment. These three factors should give us strong, sound teeth, to serve us faithfully throughout life.

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